

1. Category: **Recycling**

2. Title of Nomination: It All Comes Back to You!

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4. Nominee Information:

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It All Comes Back to You!

VA Illiana Health Care System (VAIHCS) has a definitive edge when it comes to recycling. Since FY 1999, our program has exemplified environmental stewardship. Beginning with aluminum cans and cardboard, our program now includes electronics, paper, metals, wood and more. We look for innovative approaches, techniques, and technologies that provide community assistance, cost avoidances and generate revenue for material disposition at no cost to our medical center and clinics.

Budgetary issues and a wealth of reusable items formerly destined for trash was the catalyst in implementing our recycling program. Early training enabled VA Illiana Health Care System (VAIHCS) to be “ahead of the curve” regarding due diligence in donation of recyclable materials, partnering with surrounding communities, and schools, veterans groups and other non-profit approved entities.

Our stewardship efforts have exceeded environmental compliance requirements and are included in Greening Environmental Management Systems (GEMS) policy modifications. Inter-service communication, support and coordination enable use of varied and innovative methodologies to prevent solid waste and toxic substances contamination to our earth.

As a result of our efforts in FY’05, VAIHCS realized a **28.2%** recycling rate, exceeding our FY’05 facility recycling goal of **25%** and generating **\$3459.10** in revenue and **\$51,642.73** in total cost avoidances.

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The VA Illiana Health Care System station recycling program demonstrates well-coordinated and interactive service efforts. Policy and procedures have been implemented and refined for our recycling program, enabling VA Illiana Health Care System to realize a **28.2%** recycling rate, exceeding our FY'05 facility recycling goal of **25%** and generating **\$3459.10** in revenue and **\$51,642.73** in cost avoidances.

Confidential paper, magazine, and book recycling netted **\$1200.38** in revenue and generated **83031 pounds**. Our vendor provides free bi-weekly material pick up, gaylords (containers) and pallets (if needed), for shipping paper and cardboard.

Our confidential paper program was modeled after confidential paper disposition programs presented by Hospitals for Healthy Environment (H2E) during teleconference and conference presentations. HIPAA compliance is met through annual employee security policy review and mandated educational offerings (computer based training), collection methods incorporating chain of custody during pick up and delivery to recycling area, and final pick up by vendor. A Business Associate agreement was initiated and signed with our vendor. As a result our confidential paper program provides a annual cost avoidance for onsite shredding totaling \$1575 per biweekly visit or \$40,950 annually with no revenue credited/generated.

We are piloting a paper recycling program with Georgetown, Illinois grade school. Teachers drop off paper at the recycling center where it is incorporated with our paper. Profit generated from material donated by the school is retained by the medical center. The children participating in the recycling program learn and apply real life solutions by learning what can and can't be recycled.

VAIHCS generated **54,343 pounds or 27.17 ton** of cardboard and netted **\$817.80** in revenue. Disposition of cardboard in landfill would cost approximately \$98.10 per ton and provides a cost avoidance of **\$2665.38**.

We recycled **10,170 pounds of pallets (226 plus)** by incorporating these into our cardboard and paper recycling (placed under bales/gaylords) at no cost. This reduced the number of pallets warehouse personnel had to store or arrange pick up by additional outside vendor(s).

We recycled **29,784 pounds of assorted metals** which generated **\$1440.92**. An annual cost avoidance of **\$1200** (\$100 per month) is realized by using an old large dump truck (\$600 initial investment) purchased to take our metal to scrap yard located three blocks north of our campus.

We recycled **4744 pounds of batteries** through our purchase transactions which eliminated additional disposition costs. Our new battery recycling program implemented with RBRC (Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corp) enabled free battery recycling for NIMH, NiCad, Lithium Ion and Lead batteries totaling **325 pounds** and provided a **\$667.50** cost avoidance plus free shipping by vendor.

Nutrition & Food Service and the Canteen Service generated **1200 pounds of fats and consumable food oils**. An annual cost avoidance is provided by the vendor who picks up from VAIHCS at no cost and reuses the accumulated fats and oils.

Fluorescent Lamps & Ballast disposition generated a total of **2680** pounds of bulbs which were recycled. We received a **\$240** credit for returned reusable barrels used to hold fluorescent tubes during collection and transport.

Plastic reusable 41 gallon drums were used in lieu of purchasing cardboard boxes to prepare medical waste for pick up and disposition. A cost avoidance of **\$5919.85** was realized last year after implementation of the reusable drum program.

Our reusable toner cartridge purchase/take back program was implemented over 4 years ago. The total poundage of toner cartridges recycled in FY'05 was **3723** pounds. Total amount of toner cartridges purchased in FY 2005 was **\$69,674.59**, of which **\$48,295.39** of these products contained recovered materials.

ITEM	POUNDS	REVENUE GENERATED	COST AVOIDANCE
Confidential paper books, magazines	83031	\$1200.38	\$40,950
Cardboard	54343	\$817.80	\$2665.38
Pallets	10170	\$0	
Metals	29784	\$1440.92	\$1200
Batteries	4744	\$0	\$667.50 + ship
Fats and consumable foods	1200	\$0	\$
Fluorescent Lamps & Ballast	2680	\$0	\$240 credit
Red bag waste	77805	\$0	\$5919.85 for boxes
Toner Cartridges	3723	\$0	\$
TOTALS		\$3459.10	\$51,642.73

The electronics recycling program has proven itself to be extremely cost effective over life cycle costs. The National Electronics Product Stewardship Initiative (NEPSI) established computerized equipment disposition costs at approximately \$30 per system, or \$120 per system if vendors are contracted to perform additional service work (sanitizing hard drives, deinstallation, and asset tracking) while safeguarding data.

Dedication to those in need, a wealth of usable technology otherwise destined for scrap recycling, and permission granted by E.O. 12999, Educational Technology, Ensuring Opportunity for All Children in the Next Century was a driving force in implementing our Computers for Kids program. It has enabled schools to increase the ratio of computers to students by eliminating the financial burden incurred for equipment purchase. Transportation costs incurred for disposition are minimal, as schools pick up donated computer systems at our medical center. Before leaving station, our recipients are educated regarding proper equipment recycling and disposition and sign a release form assuming responsibility for proper equipment disposition.

Disposition costs of various electronics items are avoided by utilizing computerized equipment scrap sales, an annual county sponsored electronic recycling event and donation of usable computer

equipment. Recycling costs realized during this span of time were minimal, totaling **\$59** for disposition of unusable monitors during FY'03-'04. De-installation, sanitization and asset tracking are in-house services performed by employees during daily jobs. Transportation costs incurred for disposition are minimal as an annual recycling event location is held two miles away. Our current electronics vendor provides free pick up and transportation of scrap electronics which are then refurbished for reuse or scrapped and recycled.

The following table illustrates cost avoidances (using cost guideline set by NEPSI) realized by recycling and donation of computer equipment:

FISCAL YEAR	NO. of SYSTEMS & MISC EQUIPMENT	COST AVOIDANCE AT \$30 PER SYTEM	COST AVOIDANCE AT \$120 PER SYSTEM
1998	59 systems	\$1770	\$7080
1999	13 systems	\$390	\$1560
2000	83 system	\$2790	\$11,160
2001	31 systems	\$930	\$3720
2002	113 systems	\$3390	\$13,560
2003	138 systems	\$6240	\$23,880
2004	151 systems	\$4,530	\$18,120
2005	204 systems	\$6,120	\$24,480
TOTALS	1459 systems	\$31,436	\$109,920

It is important to note that inter-service coordination and cooperation is the biggest component of this programs' success. De-installation and sanitization activities are scheduled and accomplished during staff daily duties. Outdated, though usable condition equipment is sanitized and excessed. Non-operational equipment unable to be sanitized requires hard drive removal. Hard drives are securely stored until final disposition is arranged. The remaining scrap equipment is stored in secured area until picked up by our electronics recycling vendor.

The principle barrier encountered during program and form development was ensuring compliance with VA Information Technology's Directive and Handbook 6210, Chapter 6, and VA Information Technology's Directive and handbook 6214 Security Certification and Accreditation, and HIPAA compliance through tracking and documentation during decommissioning and sanitization phases of computer excessing. A concise, one-page form containing all the required information to track each computer system from medical center user desk to recipients ensuring compliance with VA and HIPAA regulations was developed.

VAIHCS has demonstrated overall environmental stewardship with their dedication to recycling through policy modification, streamlined recycling procedures, paperwork accountability and inter-service support and cooperation. Varied and innovative methodologies are continually explored for feasibility to accomplish our mission, avoiding contribution of additional solid waste and toxic substances to our most precious resource, Planet Earth.